

REMARKS

This is in full and timely response to the above-identified Office Action. The above listing of the claims supersedes any previous listing. Favorable reexamination and reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Amendments

Claims 1-9 are maintained as they were finally rejected.

Rejections under 35 USC § 102

The rejection of claims 1-5 and 7-9 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Walker et al. is respectfully traversed. In this rejection, the Examiner relies on column 8, lines 35-48 to disclose two of features which are disclosed in claim 1. That is to say, the claimed features:

wherein the controller generates a special interval for stopping the progress of the game in the special mode, and

wherein the controller generates a dummy interval imitating the special interval in the normal mode during the game.

However, the two paragraphs of Walker et al. which are cited as disclosing the above claim features are such as to set forth:

Examining, for example, record 92A of bonus payout database 90, a set of bonus conditions are seen to include the requirement that, amongst five players, one additional royal flush must be obtained within a one hundred and twenty second time window following the occurrence of a first royal flush on one of the linked team machines, for a total of two royal flushes. **If the bonus conditions are met, the player receives a bonus payout of five hundred coins.** Records 92B and 92C indicate similar information for other bonus opportunities. The bonus

conditions contained in records 92A, 92B, 92C are seen to correspond to those displayed in machine display areas 78A, 78B, 78C, respectively.

In another embodiment of the invention, the number of players defined in field 94 comprises a range of players, for example five-to-ten players, for a given set of bonus conditions. With such a range of players defined, a subset of **players may enter into and drop from group play without any change in the bonus conditions for the ongoing players.** (Emphasis added)

Presumably it is the last 20 words (emphasized by bolding) that are the basis for the Examiner's position. Nevertheless, it is not seen that a "special interval" is mentioned let alone an interval wherein progress of the game is stopped in a special mode. There is no mention of a "dummy interval" which "imitates" the "special interval" let alone meet the claimed requirements. Indeed, it is not seen that there is any disclosure of players who do not qualify may not enter the bonus round and may spend time in a "dummy interval" that lasts as long as a special interval while waiting to rejoin the members of the special group when the normal mode conditions. That is to say, there is no discussion or disclosure of having the non-bonus group being relegated from continuous normal play. Further, there is no discussion/suggestion of a "dummy" interval wherein an "imitation" or any other mode is induced, nor does the game control which is disclosed in Walker et al. when considered as a whole, contain any suggestion of any form of "imitating" something for the benefit of some of the players which are involved.

Whether a player or a group of players drops in or out of the mainstream game, it is self-evident that the players who are not in the group should not be denied the benefit of having come up with a royal flush (for example) during the bonus round time, as would seem to have to be the case if the dummy imitation mode were to be implemented as would appear to be implied in this rejection. Note is to be had to the disclosure at column 8, lines 49-51, which indicates that the

subset of players may enter into and drop from the group play without any change in the bonus conditions for the ongoing players. This can hardly be seen as suggesting a "dummy condition or interval for the "ongoing" players, let alone disclose the same.

Thus, unless the Examiner can point out where this disclosure is to be found in a manner that a rational person would understand it to be disclosed (without the benefit of a full working knowledge of the claimed subject matter) then it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn and, in the event that the application is not passed to issue, then a further office action be issued which address each of the claimed features and points out how the disclosure which is relied upon in fact anticipates the claimed subject matter.

It should be noted that an electronic search of Walker et al. reveals a dearth of the term "imitate", "dummy" or the like key words which would be necessary if the position being taken in this rejection were to be reasonably held to be tenable. That is to say, any switch in mode cannot be assumed for the sake of rejection to be that which is claimed and more than just temporarily separating a group of players into two groups is required to enable the claimed subject matter to be disclosed.

In light of this, it cannot be seen that any possibility of the alleged disclosure being found and therefore no possibility of the alleged anticipation.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103

The rejection of claim 6 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being upatentable over Walker et al. is respectfully traversed.

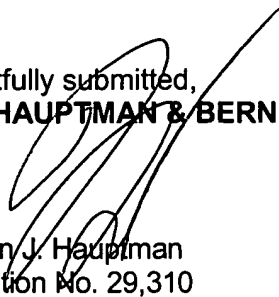
The basis of the Walker et al. arrangement is to enable games which are normally played individually - i.e. poker machines, to be grouped in a manner which is not normally possible. Mah-jong is a game which inherently requires a number of players and therefore does not suffer from the problems that are solved by the Walker et al. invention. Indeed, Mah-jong is not a slot machined game and therefore the application of this Walker et al. invention would not be considered for this type of gambling and vice versa. The need to apply the concepts of Walker et al. to Mah-jong therefore does not exist and the special requirements of this game are not provided for in manner which would facilitate the same.

Conclusion

It is respectfully submitted that the claims as they have been amended are allowable over the art which has been applied in this Office Action. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application is courteously solicited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
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